

The Usual

by Christine

Category: Water Rats

Language: English

Status: In-Progress

Published: 2000-05-02 09:00:00

Updated: 2000-05-02 09:00:00

Packaged: 2016-04-27 17:10:21

Rating: K

Chapters: 1

Words: 9,034

Publisher: www.fanfiction.net

Summary: The wedding day is set but is Rachel marrying the wrong guy?

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Author: Christine

Date: Quite a while ago- 17/12/99

Disclaimer: I already explained this to the police, the boss, and to that really noisy alarm.....yes I did take the Frank doll out of his boat in a glass bottle and escape out the doors *but* I was only borrowing him cause Southern Star and Hal McElroy own him and the rest of the characters.....can I call my lawyer now??

Author's note: Are you proud of me? I've finally finished my debut fic! Sorry it took so long! Feedback is great and always much appreciated. Thanks, I hope you like it!

I'm dedicating this fic to esme cause she has put up with all my "I've done 3 pages, 4 pages, 5 pages!" and continued to remind me that I still hadn't finished it!

~*~*~

The Usual By Christine

~*~*~

~~PART 1

She was there once again. After vowing to never trust a man again two times now she had gone and done it again. Hear this scenario for someone else's life and you would think they were dependant and just didn't know how to say no, hear this same scenario and the name

Rachel Goldstein in the same sentence and the whole context changes. Rachel is strong, calm and confident and completely independent although she fell for the wrong guy twice already and here she was again. Why? She didn't know why. Maybe she had just answered her own question. Anyway she had once again found herself trusting someone and *that* she couldn't help. This time she is older, knows all too well the risks she would be taking but it feels so right, this time it feels so right and Rachel knew she would be spending the rest of her life with Frank.....

"Frank?!" Rachel awoke with a sudden outburst, probably a symptom of her state of shock. Tomorrow she would be marrying *Jack*, *Jack*, *Jack*; she hammered his name into her head in a helpless attempt to make her subconscious mind aware of this. What was she doing a day before her wedding dreaming of marrying another guy? Rachel hated dreams, she loved to be in control and dreams were a part of life she had to accept she would never be in control of. She climbed out of bed and tried to dismiss the dream-pre-wedding jitters. Then she got thinking, why was it every time someone thought of anything else apart from their wedding and whom they would be marrying they put it down to these little wedding-hating creatures that seem to always attack the night before the big day? What if these little creatures actually meant something and there were thousands of people out there marrying the wrong people? She sat at the lonely kitchen table and pondered over this thought. She had no doubt that she loved Jack but she just couldn't work out why her mind had replaced him with someone else and how come now she had the longing for Frank to knock on her front door and exclaim "I'm back Rachel, did you miss me?" Something Rachel couldn't work out, now that isn't something you hear everyday.

She realised she had burnt her toast and was running late by this time anyway so she made a mad dash for the shower. She missed Frank although up until now she had pushed him to the back of her mind. Once she got over the fact he ditched her for the sea she had put all the longing of wanting to see him again right at the back of her mind alongside everything else she didn't want to dare the remember. Now he was back at the front again and she thought about how she missed working with him-they were the best team, she could admit that, she missed talking to him-she never was one to open up but Frank somehow managed to coax out of her exactly what she was thinking and the way he always listened to her, even when he could offer no condolences, knowing he was listening was enough. She thought about the times they spent together, when they used to get drunk together and offer each other hangover cures in the morning. The time when Frank proposed to her when he was in one of those states, how angry she had got, now she just smiled at the thought of it. She imagined where she would be if she actually said yes, counting on the fact that Frank remembered what had happened the next day-Venezuela probably! If they hadn't annoyed the crap out of each other before then of course. Helen once said to her that Frank and herself were just like husband and wife, maybe they were but only in a working sense, she couldn't imagine them spending 24 hours a day with each other.

She collecting her things and hurried out the door, she was marrying Jack tomorrow and Frank was in the past. She tried to tell herself this but now it seemed with all her reminiscing he was back. In a way she wished Frank knew the big step she would be taking tomorrow, that he could be there by her side but she knew it would never be a reality for more reasons than the fact he was out in the middle of

the ocean somewhere. She remembered the night before Frank left, how he told her he would never give his blessing to anyone who wanted to marry her. This was so true though. He'd probably tell her that he was not her type, have his house raided by I.A. and uncover every last parking fine he accumulated just to turn her off him. She smiled to herself as she as she drove into work, no matter how nosey and annoying Frank was he always looked out for her and tried his best to stop her from being hurt. She jumped out the car and rushed into the station in which was really her second home.

"Rachel!" Helen called out to her and she trundled up the stairs to her office.

"What?" Rachel turned curiously around.

"Good to see you happy."

Rachel realised she was wearing a smile that spread across her face from one ear to the other. This is what Frank...*Jack*, *Jack*, could do for her. She was going to have to do something about this.

She turned back and continued her usual migration up the stairs. The office was surprisingly empty, with three detectives all sharing the same room this was a rare event although Rachel was secretly pleased-she felt so happy today and she wanted to soak up this feeling herself for a while. She wanted to take full advantage of the way she felt- it had been quite a while since she walked into work with *that* big a smile spreading across her face and she found it kind of embarrassing. She dumped herself at her desk and sat back-she hardly knew what to do with herself. It wasn't exactly normal having nothing to do when you are involved with the Sydney Water Police. Of course there was paperwork she could be catching up on but as usual she couldn't bring herself to get started on it. She thought of the times when Frank and herself had these nothing to do bored out of our minds days- they were rare although she still remembered exactly what would happen. They would both sit at their desks pretending to be concentrating on the paperwork then they would almost at the same moment look at each other and head straight for the pub-as if they could read each other's minds- sometimes it really seemed as though they could. 'God,' Goldie thought to herself realising again what she was doing-that dream had really triggered some sort of Frank recall button, memories of him kept flooding into her mind, although she didn't really try that hard to fight them off, secretly she was enjoying them. Mick who had finally decided to make an appearance interrupted her thoughts at that point.

"So, what's on the agenda today?" Rachel asked when Mick didn't even say as much as a hello.

"Nothing much as yet," Mick answered as it he was expecting the day to suddenly take a turn for the worst.

Rachel could tell Mick was in a bad mood so she chose to ignore his pessimistic thoughts, she had a good feeling about today and she wasn't going to let Mick spoil that.

"What are you looking so smug about huh?" Mick asked trying to sound surprised. He knew the answer he just wanted to hear Rachel say that she was actually excited about her wedding today. His plan obviously didn't work however and he was somewhat disappointed by Rachel's calm

reply.

"Oh nothing...*really*." She had realised what Mick was getting at and wide-eyed and tight-lipped she looked away from him somewhat resembling a little kid when they are trying to fool someone but really want to tell them the truth at the same time.

"Where's Jack this morning?" Mick asked, keeping the subject topic open to discussion.

"I was just about to ask you the same question." Surprised that she hadn't even considered where Jack was as yet.

Before Rachel had a chance to really think about where Jack could be Helen is standing at the doorway demanding attention without even saying a word.

"Hey Rachel, just got a call from Tommy, there's a boat coming in that you may be interested in."

"Yeah, what have they done," Rachel asks displeased, she was starting to get used to the idea of an easy day.

"Oh, don't worry, they haven't done anything wrong, not for a while anyway."

Rachel perks up and looks up from her desk curiously at Helen.

"Well come on," Helen says impatiently motioning her out the door.

Rachel gets up, glances at Mick and shrugs as she turns and follows Helen down the stairs and out to the docks where she sees a familiar boat directly in line with herself. The permanent smile from this morning on Rachel's face immediately changes to an amazing grin when she reads the bold word written on the side of the boat that seem to stand out away from everything else, 'FOOTLOOSE.' She turns to Helen and Helen nods and smiles back as if she is answering an unspoken statement that Rachel was meaning to say, 'its Frank.' By this stage Frank has noticed both Helen and Rachel standing at the docks and now Mick who is walking towards the same place. An amazing feeling overcomes him as he sees his old friends and workmates again and he blinks a few times to make sure he isn't just imaging the scene which he had a tendency to do whenever he felt lonely out at sea. Rachel would always seem to pop into his mind at those times and now here she was in real life standing only metres away from him looking healthier and brighter than ever. The sun is shining off her dark hair and she looked the picture of perfection Frank thought as he continually waves an outstretched hand in their direction and as they all respond with the same gesture. Rachel was examining his tanned skin and thought that he looked a little younger, he looked happy and she couldn't have felt better the moment he hit the dock. Frank literally jumped off his small boat.

"Ah, this place looks familiar, do I know you?" he exclaimed before taking Rachel into his arms, picking her up and spinning her around. As soon as he put her down they both started the usual "how are you?" at the same time and stopped and laughed when they realised it. Rachel began to ask "what are you..." but she was cut off when he let

go of her to hug Helen and shake Mick's hand and Jeff's also who had emerged from the station. Rachel was half glad of that as she was so happy she didn't really need to listen to an explanation at this stage, she just wanted to allow herself to absorb the moment. After doing the rounds Frank found his way back to Rachel who motioned him to tie up his boat first before it left him behind, not that she would mind that of course. Frank finished tying up the boat and looked up at Rachel-the kind of look he sometimes gave her that made her feel uncomfortable.

"Wow, you look...great," he said pondering over which word to describe her incredible stance.

"So do you," Rachel replied as she summed up Frank once again, this time from a much closer position. He was wearing much the same as she remembered him wearing when he left her fighting back tears on the dock. His cotton shorts sat just above his knees and he wore a plain green t-shirt and flimsy looking sandals. He seemed to have a newfound, carefree look about him which seemed to make him look younger compared to the stressed out way he looked before he left. Rachel walked proudly beside him as they made their way to the ever so familiar building and although they walked in silence they both knew they would soon to be sitting and listening to each other's stories, nothing seemed to have changed between them. Frank followed as Rachel walked into the building and then stood back as everyone crowded round Frank. There were hugs and handshakes all round until Frank finally emerged and went upstairs to find Rachel, they had a *lot* to catch up on and he couldn't wait to start. Rachel watched as he strolled right into the office like he had never left and stood over her at her desk.

"Hello," Frank said like they had just been acquainted.

"Hey Francis," said Rachel playing along with his game.

"You busy?"

"Nah, it's been a really slow morning."

Frank held out his hand and Rachel took hold of it without hesitation, she knew exactly where they would be going.

"Will you be right Mick?" Rachel called over her shoulder as she left the room.

"Yeah fine," Mick replied.

Not that she really heard his reply though. With all this excitement even the thought that Jack hadn't turned up for work yet didn't even cross her mind again. They passed Jeff on the way out who seemed to ok it, even if he didn't it wouldn't have stopped Rachel anyway.

At the pub it was good old times again, Frank and Rachel ordered the usual and talked just like they always did after a long day at work although this time the stories varied a bit more and they were hearing them firsthand, instead of discussing they were telling. Frank talked of his adventures, where he had been, who he had met and generally what the whole experience was like. He never really said why he returned and when Rachel asked he just told her that it was time. Rachel didn't peruse the topic anymore and continued talking

about work as usual and about David of course and how much he had grown up. They didn't drink much as Rachel was still technically on duty and they stayed at the pub listening and talking to each other for about an hour before they wandered back to the docks and boarded Frank's boat. Frank showed Rachel around the place which had been his home for the past while which brought on more conversation. Rachel still had made no reference to her wedding. Every time there was a silence she would ponder over telling him but then Frank would mention something else and they would be off again. Why did she find it so hard to tell him? She talked about practically everything with Frank and used to open up to him more than anyone but she really did not know how to tell him that tomorrow she would no longer be single. When she had mentioned that she worked with Jack now Frank didn't exactly seem over the moon, he never really thought much of Jack so that discouraged her from saying anything about the wedding even more. She tried to convince herself that Frank's opinion didn't worry her but she couldn't deny how much better she would feel if she knew Frank would jump up and tell her she was making the right decision and that Jack was a great guy-dream on Rachel, even the very thought of Frank saying that made her smirk. Also because they were acting so normal, like nothing had changed and she knew if she told him it would change things. Somewhere in the middle of Frank explaining the taste of some foreign beer the familiar cry of Rachel's phone sounded.

"Yeah, Goldstein," Rachel answered.

"Rachel you wouldn't know where Jack would be would you?" came Helen's voice over the phone.

"What? Hasn't he shown up yet?"

"No, and we can't seem to get a hold of him on his mobile either"

"Ah, well, I don't know, I haven't seen him all day. What, do you need someone?"

"Oh no you're right, just wanted to let him know that Chris Richards, a guy he put away escaped from prison today"

"Hang on, and you can't find Jack"

"Rachel don't worry, the guy's gone interstate, I just wanted to let Jack know ok?"

"You sure?"

"Yeah, look Rachel don't worry"

"Yeah ok, thanks Helen," Rachel hangs up the phone.

"Is everything alright?" Frank could sense the unsureness in Rachel's voice.

"Yeah, Jack didn't show up for work today. I'm going to try and get a hold of him."

"What are you? His minder?"

Rachel just looked at Frank, she knew she had to tell him and now would be the perfect time but she let it slip by.

"Yeah, something like that, look I'm gonna pop home first and then try and get a hold of Jack so..."

"Ok well, I'll come with you, I wanna see what this new D's car you were telling me about is like," Frank answered eagerly. In reality it was just an excuse to spend more time with Rachel-he was enjoying being with her more than he wanted to let on.

Rachel didn't know what to say, she didn't really want Frank seeing her house, there were traces of Jack all over the place but then again it could provide an easy way of breaking the news to Frank.

"Ummm...yeah ok then- it's much better than the one we used to drive Frank."

"What are you talking about *we*, you wouldn't let me drive half the time..."

And they were off again.

Pretty soon they were at Rachel's house. Rachel took a deep breath and as casually as possible opened the front door and almost as quickly closed it again while trying to hide an amazing look of pure shock on her face.

"Well, aren't we going to go in?" Frank asked in his sarcastic tone.

"Nah, look I can come back later, the place is a mess and..."

"Rachel, since when has that bothered you before, just open the door will you?"

Rachel shot a pleading glance at Frank who didn't seem to respond and once again took a deep breath and opened the door. They both stood in silence for a moment while they took in the scene that was presented in front of them. Dozens of flowers and balloons filled the room. Frank strolled into the room and turned to Rachel with a mischievous grin on his face.

"Goldie? Is there something you are not telling me?" Got yourself a secret admirer hey?"

By this stage Rachel had followed Frank into her house and had started scanning the place when her eyes caught a flash of movement and fell on a spot behind the couch. Frank saw the expression change on her face so he curiously moved over to the couch and peeped behind. He looked up at Rachel again straight away- there was that cheeky smile again- here we go thought Rachel.

"Detective Jack Christey." Frank exclaimed while stretching an open hand behind the couch to the man dressed only in his satin boxer shorts and holding a red rose between his teeth.

Rachel just stood back and watched the ridiculous scene, half of her

was embarrassed as hell and the other half just wanted to let out an almighty laugh. If it would have happened to anyone than the person she was going to marry tomorrow and if it happened in anyone else's house it would have been the funniest sight, damn- Frank was never going to let her live this one down.

Jack returned the handshake. "Frank" he said, "nice to see you again," while trying to think of anything apart from the fact he was in his silky boxer shorts in front of his fiancÃ©s old partner.

"Yeah, you too mate," Frank replied while trying hard to compose himself.

Jack was rummaging around for his clothes and seeming to have a great deal of difficulty in putting them back on with the speed in which he was trying to. There they were- Jack, now fully dressed; Frank, chucking cheeky grins Rachel's way; and Rachel standing there dumbfounded. Jack wasn't the sort of person do this kind of thing and she wasn't the sort of person that would receive it either. It was obviously taking her a while for the whole idea of it to sink in, in between fighting back spouts of laughter.

Frank looked from Rachel to Jack and back again. "Well I think I better go," he announced while giving Rachel a quick wink and heading in the direction of the door.

"Ah...Frank, what are you doing tomorrow?" Rachel asked as Frank stopped and faced her way.

"Nothing as yet," he answered curiously.

Rachel shot a wide-eyed glance at Jack before continuing. "Ah...how would you like to come to my wedding?"

~*~*~

~~PART 2

Frank was shocked. For a moment he just stood there with no emotion shown glaring at Rachel. He *was* about to go home and get used to the fact that Rachel and Jack were together and try to erase the vision of Jack in his underwear from his mind and now Rachel dropped this onto him as well- and he expected his life to be *less* complicated now! He shot a glance at the door- indicating that he wanted to leave and then turned back to Rachel. "Ah, yeah, I think I should be able to make it," he said still allowing no emotion to be shown. Without another word he left the house and both Rachel and Jack silently staring at each other. "I'll be back in a sec, oh and Jack, it was a nice thought but don't ever do it again," Rachel said warningly as she headed out the door after Frank.

Jack collapsed on the couch that hadn't protected him from his embarrassing situation in any way and thought about Rachel and the fact that Frank was back and what was going to happen now. He knew how much Frank meant to Rachel, the reality of this became perfectly clear when he turned up for work the day after Frank left to find Rachel seeming amazingly interested in a tie she was wrapping around her fingers. She was clearing out Frank's desk and gathering together the things that he had left behind. Even though Jack's things were

scattered all over Rachel's house the fact that she still had that tie and photos and whatever else of Frank's that was left behind also somewhere in the house made Jack feel uneasy combined with the fact that she was out chasing after Frank and he was sitting alone in her house on the night before their wedding.

Outside Rachel had stopped Frank just as he was about to get into a taxi. He dropped his head and hesitated a moment before motioning the taxi driver to continue on his way without him.

"What are you doing? I haven't told you anything yet, you know, where it is, what time, it is tomorrow you know." Rachel said, the frustration coming through in her tone.

"Rachel you can't even say the word!" Frank exclaimed.

"What?"

"Wedding, the word wedding"

"I can so, anyway this coming from Mr two ex-wives," Rachel said defensively although she did realise she kept referring to the event as 'it'.

"At least I admitted to myself I **was** actually getting married," Frank was matching Rachel's defensiveness.

"Look Frank, I made this decision without you and you being here now is not going to change anything- jeez Frank you always do this!" Rachel realised once she said this that she really shouldn't have- he was right about Knocker and in the end she was glad that he had been so persistent- he was annoying but he cared and she knew he only did it for her sake she just wanted it to work this time and she had no doubts before Frank showed up- it **was** working. Frank still hadn't said anything so she continued putting all doubts aside.

"The service is at one o'clock in the park next to Sydney Harbour. The reception is straight after that."

"Ok then," Frank answered, thinking to himself that is was just like Rachel to avoid a traditional church wedding.

Rachel looked deep into Frank's eyes. She knew what Frank was trying to tell her but he didn't know Jack like she did and he certainly could not expect to come back and become her minder although when she couldn't find any reasons in his sea blue eyes she couldn't help asking his true opinion.

"Why Frank? Come on tell me why the hell shouldn't I go through with this! Jack hasn't killed anyone, he's paid all his parking fines, the worst thing he's done is make a fool of himself tonight, so what is it Frank?"

Frank paused for a moment; all the fight seemed to seep out of him. "Rachel, if you're happy I'm happy," he told her lifting his arms up in defeat and giving a slight shrug at the same time in some attempt to make the point clear to her, although the subconscious shrug indicated he still wasn't content.

"I'm happy," Rachel said more quietly.

Frank looked ahead of him, past the darkness of Rachel's street, past the busy city lights, searching for the right thing to say right now. "I'll see-you tomorrow then," he said turning back to Rachel.

"Yeah, see-ya," Rachel said still not fully letting down her guard before turning around and making her way back to the house where Jack would be waiting for her. She turned around when she heard Frank's voice though call out to her.

"Goldie," he waited for her response. "You do know you are supposed to wear a dress to these dos don't you?" Frank teased knowing Rachel never wore dresses.

"Gotcha, I'll remember that," she gave him a smile even though he probably wouldn't see it and turned into her yard.

Frank hesitated a moment and when she was out of sight he continued walking into the darkness.

When Rachel got inside again Jack wasn't there. She had been so worked up fighting with Frank that she must have missed him escaping. She gave a faint grin at the thought of Jack grabbing his flowers and balloons and running up the street in his underwear. Thankfully he was fully dressed when he left and the balloons and flowers were still scattered across the lounge room along with a note left on the table in the middle of the room. Rachel knew what to expect but she read it anyway.

Rachel, Thought you might like some time alone, it **is** bad luck for the groom to see the bride before the wedding remember. Call me if you like otherwise I'll see-you tomorrow. Love Jack.

She folded the note and placed it back on the table. Really what could she expect? She was aware that she went off after Frank and left Jack sitting there when he **had** gone to all that trouble with not even a thankyou. She didn't mean to be rude- what Jack did was a nice thing, just not a Rachel thing. She wasn't exactly the romantic-flowers-balloons-underwear type, ok the underwear part wasn't that bad she admitted to herself with a smirk. She just didn't expect it and she definitely didn't want Frank to see it. **Why was that?** She didn't want to go into all the gritty details but she **was** having doubts a day before her wedding day so she definitely had a deadline to work to to get rid of them. When she really thought about it the only reason she was having doubts was because of Frank's disapproval...and the fact that he was back. Even though they were never together there was always the possibility that they had come so close to exploring a few times. She thought back to the night before Frank left- **we almost kissed- what the hell did that mean?** She hadn't given it much thought before, probably because she didn't expect to see him so soon again. **Was it just because he was leaving and they thought they might as well give in to their curiosity knowing it would go nowhere or did it mean...nah, it couldn't...could it? They really do have feelings for each other?**

Rachel climbed into bed without doing any of the usual bedtime routines- she would be dolled up enough tomorrow to compensate for tonight she thought to herself. She didn't call Jack, she was glad that he had given her some alone time. She turned off the light and

remembered what time Helen and Tayler were coming round- too early! They had insisted on helping her with the usual- hair, dress, make-up, all those *girly* things. She reprimanded herself at that thought, *stuff the front Rachel* she told herself- maybe for at least one day she should let others fuss over her. Well at least let them have the pleasure of this one off occasion. Tomorrow she was getting married to Jack and she feel asleep with that thought.

Frank eventually made it home that night and straight away collapsed on the couch in his musty smelling house. Apart from the smell the place still seemed as if it had always been lived in, shoes were still at the front door, food was still in the fridge waiting for the next unsuspecting victim to open the door and release the horrid smell, and his work suits were still hanging in his cupboard. Even if it hadn't been a last minute decision to leave Frank still probably would have left his house in this state anyway. He set himself up for a long sleepless night- he knew he was I for one. This was just not turning out as he expected or maybe even more so how he wanted it to. He had figured that tonight would be spent telling stories with the company of alcohol and Rachel on his lounge room floor- instead he was alone with a real longing for some company but the fridge was empty and hell, that's what he came back for in the first place- company- the Rachel variety was the more favourable though. He missed just being with her, talking with her, working with her, pissing her off, he missed not knowing what would have happened if they kissed *that* night. That was the real truth in the matter and now he had missed the boat so to speak. She was getting married tomorrow and he could see that chance edging further and further away from him every minute he lay there awake. She *was* right though, he shouldn't have expected to just come back and find things exactly how he left them, he shouldn't have expected Rachel would wait for him and he can't expect to be able to tell her who she can and can't marry, can't more like it. He was really in a no win situation. He didn't know Jack all that well and "he just isn't right for you" isn't a valid reason not to marry the guy in Rachel's books. And he couldn't tell her how he felt on her wedding day- she would hate him and he didn't want to risk their friendship- if that's all they could have it was much more than nothing. Unless, nah, she couldn't...feel the same way about him? He turned off the light and threw some blankets over the top of himself- tomorrow he would go to Rachel's wedding and wish her well and he eventually fell asleep with that thought.

Rachel awoke the next morning to the sound of knocking at her front door, or was it the back? She turned over and glanced at the alarm clock beside her bed- its red numbers glared back at her reading 9.00am. "Shit!" she said out loud when it registered in her mind that the continuous knocks, coming from both the front and back doors were those of Helen and Tayler and that she had overly slept in. Jumping out of bed she caught sight of herself in the mirror- she was still fully clothed from last night but that didn't in any way hide the fact that she had just woken up. She decided to go with the front door as the knocks at the back had now stopped and there were twice as many at the front door and was greeted by two overly excited faces.

"Well don't just stand there, we only have 4 hours," Helen said tapping her watch.

"4 hours! How long were you hoping for?" Rachel said mockingly as she

was literally pushed back into her house and in the direction of her bathroom by the two women armed with make-up, hair and dress accessories on an obvious mission.

"Rachel, did you only just get up?" Tayler exclaimed when Rachel wouldn't allow them to take her any further than the kitchen before she made herself a cuppa.

"Yeah, so?"

"Oh, nothing, we just might have a little trouble getting rid of the puffiness around your eyes," Tayler said looking closely at Rachel with a cheeky grin.

"And getting your hair out of that...position," Helen added joining in.

"Hey watch it!"

"Ok grab your coffee, come on," Helen said pointing in the direction of the bathroom.

Rachel sighed and walked into the bathroom but stopped when the other two followed her in.

"Get out, I still gotta have a shower, we wouldn't want puffy eyes, bad hair and a smell now would we?" Rachel said sarcastically.

"Oh Rachel, hurry up ok, we now only have 3 hours and 50 minutes," Tayler yelled through the closed bathroom door.

Rachel climbed into the shower but no faster than her usual pace. *Today I am getting married* she told herself, *oh god, today I'm getting married*. She got out pretty soon after she got in as she was sick of Tayler yelling for her to hurry up through the door. She cleared away the steam for the mirror- *today I am getting married* she told herself before opening the door and letting Tayler and Helen do their stuff.

By twelve o'clock Rachel was ready. Well physically she was but mentally she was nervous as hell. Not that she would allow Tayler or Helen to see that though. They had got her to try on so many different lipsticks that her lips now felt like dry prunes and her eye still stung from when Tayler accidentally jabbed her with the eyeliner pencil, apart from that she thought she looked ok, like a bride should anyway. She had a two-piece wedding dress- a simple white shaped sleeveless top and the usual flared out white wedding dress on the bottom minus the long tail though. Rachel wanted to make sure she didn't have to have people hanging off her just so she could walk up the isle- probably another independence thing. After her hair was put up, twisted around and clipped they decided it looked best down with a neat silver tiara embedded into it. Tayler and Helen were extremely happy with the result anyway and were standing admiring Rachel when there was a knock at the front door. The three women exchanged unknowing glances- Rachel's dad and David weren't supposed to be here until almost one o'clock. Helen got up to answer the door when she thought she had worked out who it would be. "Frank!" Helen exclaimed, not surprised to see him though. Frank was standing on the doorstep in a black suit, white shirt and a red tie. He didn't look all that different from his usual work appearance but the white shirt

indicated he had made an effort.

"I heard there was a wedding today, thought I might drop round and see how things were coming along," Frank said as he began walking into the house.

"Good, we need a man's opinion," Helen said.

Rachel overheard that part and realised that of course she was talking to Frank.

"Frank wouldn't know the difference between a wedding dress and pyjamas!" Rachel called out from the kitchen where her and Tayler were making coffee.

"We'll see about that," Frank replied as Helen lead him into the kitchen.

Rachel turned to face him and Frank nearly literally fell over when he saw her. He took a few steps backwards to regain his balance and the only thoughts that were racing through his mind were that Jack must be the luckiest guy alive. She was absolutely beautiful. Not that he hadn't noticed how attractive she was before there was just something about her that seemed to stand out today. The tiara on top of her head gave her a stunning radiant look, she had heels on so she looked even taller than usual, he couldn't work it out though- her whole stature was just stunning. Frank struggled a moment for words and Helen must have picked up on this.

"We did a pretty good job on her didn't we?"

Frank found his words now and picked them carefully. "Mmmm...not bad," he said as he edged his way closer to Rachel to get a better look, "yeah, not bad at all, you just got a little something..." Frank pointed to her chest and Rachel looked down and he flicked her forehead, "made ya look," he exclaimed.

Frank was back Rachel thought to herself- he was back.

"Ha ha Frank, very funny." Rachel commented sarcastically.

Frank just shrugged. "It was funny in primary school," he added. "I didn't have time to get you and Jack a toaster or anything but-" he reached into the inside pocket of his suit and pulled out a flat, wrapped object, "I got you this." He passed the rectangular shaped present to Rachel and kissed her on the cheek- *god she smelt nice too!*

"Frank, I didn't expect you or anyone to get me anything, I only told you last night," Rachel said genuinely surprised.

"I know, look it's not much- open it," Frank said.

Rachel unwrapped the present and stopped to examine the contents. It was a framed postcard with Brisbane, QLD written across a picture of the ocean on the front. She looked up at Frank and smiled.

"What happened to this one?" she said.

"Read it," Frank exclaimed and she began to read Frank's writing on

the back of the card.

Dear Rachel, Well, I'm sending you a postcard from Brisbane, Frank keeps his promises, it'll be the last one too. I'm having such a great time that I think I'll be too pre-occupied exploring the exotic islands and with all the gorgeous women here that I really don't think I'll have time to send anymore. Nah, only joking, I'm coming back to Sydney. This isn't me Rachel; I belong on Sydney Harbour fighting evil- with you. Now I expect a huge welcome home Frank party when I get back and you to be there waiting for me, got that? Good. See-ya soon mate, Frank.

P.S. I didn't really meet anyone, honest! What about you?

"Why didn't you send it?" Rachel asked unsure of what else to say.

"I decided it would be better to surprise you and hey I didn't get the party but you were there."

"Thanks Frank," Rachel said giving his hand a quick squeeze, she knew he was giving her an explanation and it reassured her although it also made her feel a bit guilty. She knew it shouldn't have but he came back because he missed her and now it was as if she was abandoning him.

Frank gave Rachel a quick smile and looked down at his watch. "So are we off then?"

"Yep" Rachel said breathing in. "Just gotta wait until Dad and David get here."

Helen and Tayler finished getting themselves ready and by the time they had got themselves organised and finished their coffees Felix and David had arrived. They all piled out the door and into the various cars that had accumulated out the front of Rachel's house. This is it, Rachel thought when she piled in alongside her Dad and they made their way to the park overlooking the waters of Sydney Harbour. No crime down there today- just beautiful still waters, birds and sunshine- however that did not reassure Rachel's nerves in anyway.

Jack was standing at what would have been the alter if they were in a church exchanging words with both his best man, Mick Reilly, and the priest. He didn't look nervous at all- although that wasn't exactly abnormal for Jack. Rachel remembered when *he* kissed her for the first time, he just saw the opportunity and literally went for it, she definitely was not expecting anything of the sort and she actually told him something along the lines of she would smash his teeth in if he tried it again. After that came *six* "one-night stands" until they finally admitted or realised they were in a relationship, yep Jack definitely wasn't the nervous type. He was straight-faced but that changed as soon as he glanced behind his shoulder and saw Rachel emerging from her father's car. A smile spread across his face as he watched her yelling at Tayler about something- soon he would be married to that amazing woman and what happened last night didn't even cross his mind again. She caught him smiling at her and gave him a slight smile and he seemed content and turned back around.

It was a small wedding. White plastic chairs were placed in rows across the grass allowing an aisle to form down the centre. People gradually claimed their chairs when they saw the bride arriving and slowly their voices and loud chatter subsided to whispers, still commenting on the wedding and now probably how Rachel looked. Frank muttered something to Rachel about waiting a minute- a chair had been moved into the middle of the aisle and he went to move it out of the way but Rachel wasn't really listening. A feeling of 'this is wrong, she shouldn't be here' suddenly overwhelmed her and then she heard Frank's panicking voice yelling "EVERYBODY GET DOWN, GET DOWN!" Without question everybody fell to the ground pulling each other down with them. Then in a split second decision Rachel watched on in disbelief as Frank threw himself in front of Jack and the unmistakable sound of a gunshot went off and hung ringing in her ears. "Frank!" Rachel yelled as she attempted to run towards him, cursing the dress the whole way. He had gone down just as the shot was fired and Rachel found herself fearing the worst. Out the corner of her eye she caught sight of a man attempting to run away, keeping his gun drawn though but the others were already on to him, what was he thinking trying this at a copper's wedding, how stupid really was he? She turned back again for a second remembering David and her dad but they were fine and far away from any danger by now. Guests were beginning to gather around where Frank was lying but they all parted as soon as Rachel arrived. Frank was now attempting to sit up and this gave Rachel a huge sense of relief but then she sighted the hole in the shoulder of his suit jacket and the darker ring around it that was very quickly becoming larger and wider. "Has somebody called an ambulance?" Rachel yelled impatiently. Somebody yelled back "yep, they're on their way" but Rachel had no time to see who and thank them.

"Shit!" Frank exclaimed as he failed his attempt to sit up and fell back onto Rachel who had caught him just in time. Rachel slowly took off his suit jacket and loosened his tie to try and get a better look at the wound. She then placed his jacket over the wound and held it firmly down to try and slow the bleeding.

"You don't mind if I get a bit of blood on this do ya Frank?" Rachel said trying to lighten the mood and fool herself a bit.

"Nah, just as long as *you* wash it," Frank said slowly while trying to give Rachel a reassuring smile.

"You right Frank?" "Don't faint on me ok?" Rachel said as she saw Frank becoming paler.

"Yep, good as bloody gold," Frank managed to say very unconvincingly.

"Where the hell is the ambulance?" Rachel said when the paramedics were already running towards them. Rachel kept talking to Frank and stroking his wet forehead while the ambos did their stuff and got him on to a stretcher. She got up and walked alongside Frank to the ambulance and turned to give Jack a pleading glance but she made sure she climbed into the ambulance before Jack could return the glance.

"Rachel it's your wedding day, you don't wanna go to the hospital," Frank said softly.

"Shut-up Frank, I'm coming," she said and Frank didn't bother to argue with that.

At the hospital Frank was rushed off to the operating room to remove the bullet and Rachel was left waiting. She sat down but didn't stay sitting for long before she got up again and started pacing past the water cooler and back again. People walked past and gave her sympathising looks, at first she didn't think much of it and just nodded slightly as they went by silently offering their condolences but then she realised it was the wedding dress- she could imagine what it would have looked like and what everyone would be thinking. She half expected Jack to turn up any minute but she was really hoping that he didn't. She really did not know what she would say to him if he did and she wasn't in the mood to think of something. After wearing a hole in the ground she took a seat and the reality of what Frank did registered in her mind. *He did it for her, he risked his own life for her happiness* and suddenly she wanted to punch him and hug him at the same time. Frank was always there for her and she probably always knew he would do anything for her but now that it had become a true reality she felt angry and overjoyed and grateful and scared all at the same time. She had so much to think about and work out what she would do next but all she *could* think about was what Frank had done, for her. She got up with the intention of getting some fresh air when she saw some nurses and a doctor wheeling Frank into the room opposite her. The doctor then left it up to the nurses and came over to talk to her.

"The operation went well," he said cutting straight to the point, which Rachel appreciated, "We were able to remove the bullet effectively and you're quick thinking stopped him from loosing too much blood."

Her quick thinking? Rachel wondered what stupid person wouldn't know to apply pressure to a wound to slow the bleeding but she didn't speak her mind. "Can I go in and see him?"

"Well he's still un-"

"Of course his still under, I just to go and see him," Rachel snapped.

"Yeah, you can go in," the doctor replied.

Rachel nodded and walked into the room. The doctor turned to one of the nurses at the front desk.

"Poor woman, the cops are going to want to talk to him soon, she'll have no time with him."

"She is a cop," the nurse said, "So is he."

The doctor glanced in the direction of Frank's room. "Well that explains it then," he said with a slight smile.

Inside the room Rachel sat on a chair near the bed that would have held so many people's heartache and tears and thanked God she wasn't going to be one of them today. After not long Helen, Tayler, Jeff, Tommy, Gavin and Mick all dropped by at various times to see how Frank was and to fill Rachel in on the case. As Rachel expected it was that Chris Richards guy, the one who Jack put away and of course

he was coming back for revenge. They all didn't stay long though and pretty soon Rachel was alone once again in the room with Frank. She leant forward and rested her head on her hands on the edge of the bed and fell into a light sleep. Frank awoke after not long and just watched Rachel sleeping. Wow! He thought he had had a rough day- what about her! She had been through so much today but she was still here when he needed her most and that he was so thankful for. He raised his arm that wasn't restrained by a sling and placed it on her head and she stirred and opened her eyes.

"Hey," Frank said quickly moving his hand away.

"Hey, how are you feeling?"

"Ah, not bad, you know," he said lifting his arm in a sling slightly. "You?"

Rachel ignored his question. "What did you think you were doing out there Frank?" She knew exactly what she just wanted to hear it from Frank.

"I just wanted you to be happy."

"So you thought I would be happy with a best friend with a bullet in him?"

"Better than a dead husband."

Rachel paused for a moment. Did he really mean that? Is that how people who are really in love should feel? Hell, of course that is how they *should* feel...if they were really in love.

Frank was about to take this opportunity to ask about Jack and the wedding but he thought it better to leave that subject alone for the time being.

"I'm sorry Rachel..." Frank started but stopped himself from saying anything else when Rachel leant down and kissed him on the forehead.

"Thanks Frank, I owe you one," she said and as she brought her head back up Frank raised his good arm to her face.

"I only did it cause I care about you mate," he said.

"Yeah, I know Rachel said staring into his eyes. She brought her head back away from Frank's hand even though she secretly wished the wind would change and they would be stuck like that forever.

"I look out for you, you look out for me," Frank said as Rachel turned to leave. "The usual."

"Always," Rachel said giving him a reassuring smile.

"I'll see you tomorrow ok, oh and Francis, don't give any of the nurses a hard time ok?"

"Would I do a thing like that?" he said raising his good arm.

Rachel just shook her head but inside she was thanking whoever had given her such a great friend who was prepared to do what Frank had done for her and whoever was looking over today and making sure he was still alive. She began to walk out the door, what more could a copper expect at their wedding?

"Hey Goldie, get us something decent to eat for lunch tomorrow will ya? "The food in here..." Frank called out to her.

"Yeah, yeah Frank," she said without turning around. There was that smile again though- for the meantime she had all that she needed and life was once again...usual.

~*~*~

THE END

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End
file.